IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): An aqueous dispersion of water-soluble polymers obtained by free radical polymerization of ethylenically unsaturated anionic monomers in an aqueous medium in the presence of ~~at least one~~ a stabilizer, wherein the ~~at least one~~ stabilizer comprises:

(a) at least one water-soluble polymer selected from the group consisting of a graft polymer of vinyl acetate and/or vinyl propionate on polyethylene glycol, a polyethylene glycol blocked at one or both terminal groups with an alkyl, a carboxyl or an amino group, and a copolymer of alkyl polyalkylene glycol methacrylate and methacrylic acid;

and

(b) at least one water-soluble polymer selected from the group consisting of a hydrolyzed copolymer of vinyl alkyl ether and maleic anhydride in the form of [[a]] free carboxyl ~~group~~ groups or ~~and~~ in the form of a salt at least partly neutralized with one or more alkali metal hydroxides or one or more ammonium bases, a cationically modified potato starch, an anionically modified potato starch, a degraded potato starch and maltodextrin.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein ~~at least one~~ a polyalkylene glycol having a molar mass Mn of from 100 to 100000, and ~~at least one~~ a polyalkylene glycol blocked at one or both terminal groups with an alkyl, a carboxyl or an amino group and having a molar mass Mn of from 100 to 100000, are used as the at least one water-soluble polymer of (a).

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein the hydrolyzed copolymer of vinyl alkyl ether and maleic anhydride in the form of [[a]] free carboxyl ~~group~~ groups or ~~and~~ in the form of a salt at least partly neutralized with one or more alkali metal hydroxides or one or more ammonium bases, and/or maltodextrin, are used as the at least one water-soluble polymer of (b).

Claim 4 (Currently Amended): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein a hydrolyzed copolymer of vinyl methyl ether and maleic anhydride in the form of [[a]] free carboxyl ~~group~~ groups or ~~and~~ in the form of a salt at least partly neutralized with sodium hydroxide solution, potassium hydroxide solution or ammonia, are used as the at least one water-soluble polymer of (b).

Claim 5 (Currently Amended): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein the ~~at least one~~ stabilizer comprises:

(a) ~~one or more~~ a graft ~~polymers~~ polymer of vinyl acetate on polyethylene glycol and having a molecular weight M_n of from 1000 to 100000;

and

(b) ~~one or more~~ a hydrolyzed ~~copolymers~~ copolymer of vinyl methyl ether and maleic anhydride in the form of free carboxyl groups ~~and~~ or in the form of ~~salts~~ a salt at least partly neutralized with sodium hydroxide solution, potassium hydroxide solution or ammonia.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein the ~~at least one~~ stabilizer comprises:

(a) one or more copolymers of alkyl polyalkylene glycol methacrylate and methacrylic acid;

and

(b) at least one hydrolyzed copolymer of vinyl methyl ether and maleic anhydride in the form of [[a]] free carboxyl ~~group~~ groups or ~~and~~ in the form of a salt at least partly neutralized with sodium hydroxide solution, potassium hydroxide solution or ammonia.

Claim 7 (Previously Presented): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein monoethylenically unsaturated C_3- to C_5-carboxylic acids, vinylsulfonic acid, styrenesulfonic acid, acrylamidomethylpropanesulfonic acid, vinylphosphonic acid and/or the alkali metal or ammonium salts thereof are used as the ethylenically unsaturated anionic monomers.

Claim 8 (Previously Presented): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein the polymerization of the ethylenically unsaturated anionic monomers is carried out in the presence of other ethylenically unsaturated monomers.

Claim 9 (Previously Presented): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 8, wherein the polymerization of the ethylenically unsaturated anionic monomers is carried out in the presence of at least one other monomer selected from the group consisting of acrylamide, methacrylamide, an acrylic ester of monohydric alcohols of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, a methacrylic ester of monohydric alcohols of 1 or 2 carbon atoms, vinyl acetate, vinyl propionate, dialkylaminoethyl(meth)acrylate, dialkylaminopropyl(meth)acrylate, diallyldimethylammonium chloride, vinylimidazole, and quaternized vinylimidazole.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein acrylic acid is used as the ethylenically unsaturated anionic monomers ~~are acrylic acid~~ and the free radical polymerization is carried out in the presence of the stabilizer but ~~are used~~ in the absence of other monomers.

Claim 11 (Previously Presented): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 1, wherein the free radical polymerization is additionally carried out in the presence of at least one crosslinking agent.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended): The aqueous dispersion according to claim 11, wherein the at least one crosslinking agent is at least one selected from the group consisting of triallylamine, pentaerythrityl triallyl ether, methylenebisacrylamide, N,N'-divinylethyleneurea, a dihydric ~~alcohols~~ alcohol of 2 to 4 carbon atoms which is completely esterified with acrylic acid or methacrylic acid, ethoxylated trimethylolpropane triacrylate, ethoxylated trimethylolpropane trimethacrylate, pentaerythrityl triacrylate, pentaerythrityl tetraacrylate, and triallylmethylammonium chloride.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): A process for the preparation of an aqueous dispersion of water-soluble polymers comprising:

free radical polymerizing ethylenically unsaturated anionic monomers in an aqueous medium in the presence of ~~at least one~~ a stabilizer, wherein the free radical polymerization is carried out at a pH of from 1 to 13 and the ~~at least one~~ stabilizer comprises:

(a) at least one water-soluble polymer selected from the group consisting of a graft polymer of vinyl acetate and/or vinyl propionate on polyethylene glycol, a polyethylene

glycol blocked at one or both terminal groups with an alkyl, a carboxyl or an amino group, and a coplymer of alkyl polyalkylene glycol methacrylate and methacrylic acid,

and

(b) at least one water-soluble polymer selected from the group consisting of a hydrolyzed copolymer of vinyl alkyl ether and maleic anhydride in the form of [[a]] free carboxyl ~~group~~ groups or ~~and~~ in the form of a salt at least partly neutralized with one or more alkali metal hydroxides or one or more ammonium bases, and maltodextrin.

Claim 14 (Previously Presented): A method for thickening an aqueous system, the method comprising:

adding the aqueous dispersion according to claim 1 to the aqueous system.

Claim 15 (Canceled).

Claim 16 (Previously Presented): The method according to claim 14, wherein the aqueous dispersion is used as an additive to paper coating slips, as thickeners for pigment print pastes and for water-based surface coatings, as thickeners for cosmetic formulations and for the surface treatment of leather.